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While U.S. summer surge is waning, more mandates in the works

By JOHN SEEWER
Associated Press

COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. are coming down again, hospitalizations are dropping, and new cases per day are about to dip below 100,000 for the first time in two months — all signs that the summer surge is waning.

Not wanting to lose momentum, government leaders and employers are looking to strengthen and vaccine requirements. Los Angeles enacted one of the nation's strictest vaccine mandates Wednesday, a sweeping measure that would require the shots for everyone entering a bar, restaurant, nail salon, gym or Lakers game. New York City and San Francisco have similar rules. Minnesota's governor this week called for vaccine and testing requirements for teachers and long-term care workers. In New York, a statewide vaccination mandate for all hospital and nursing home workers will be expanded Thursday to home care and hospice employees. Across the nation, deaths per day have dropped by nearly 15% since mid-September and are now averaging about 1,750. New cases have fallen to just over 103,000 per day on average, a 40% decline over the past three weeks.

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In this Jan. 21, 2021, file photo, a medical staff member prepares the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at Tudor Ranch in Mecca, Calif.

Associated Press

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While U.S. summer surge is waning, more mandates in the works

Continued from Fron

The number of Americans now in the hospital with COVID-19 has declined by about one-quarter since its most recent peak of almost 94,000 a month ago.

"What we're seeing is what we've seen in the prior three surges," said Dr. Marybeth Sexton, an infectious-disease specialist at Emory University School of Medicine.

"What we need to remember is when we see these numbers go down, it's not a signal to let up. It's a signal to push harder."

If people give up masks and social distancing and stop getting vaccinated, "we could be right back here in the winter with surge five," she said.

The decreases have been especially sharp in several Deep South states, where cases have gone down more than twice as fast as they have nationwide. Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Arkansas all saw their case numbers cut in half over the past two weeks.

What's behind the decline isn't entirely clear, though health experts point out that the numbers are falling

as more are people getting vaccinated and new requirements for the shot are being put in place by government and private employers.

The decrease in case numbers could also be due to the virus running out of susceptible people in some places.

Several big companies and institutions with vaccine requirements are seeing high compliance rates. In Denver, 92% of its municipal employees have gotten the shot, well above the city's overall rate.

Ochsner Health, Louisiana's



In this Sept. 13, 2021, file photo, staff at the Modern Museum of Art check visitors' proof of vaccination in New York.

Associated Press

largest health system, said last week that 82% of its employees were fully vaccinated. But this week, a group of employees sued to block the mandate, which includes making unvaccinated spouses pay an extra \$200 a month in health insurance.

Three of North Carolina's largest health systems said on Wednesday that more than 99% of the roughly 88,000 workers they collectively employ have gotten a shot or an approved medical or religious exemption.

Just under 300 workers at Duke Health, UNC Health and Novant Health have quit or been fired over their refusal to comply.

Health care giant Kaiser Permanente put more than 2,200 employees nationwide — roughly 1% of its workforce — on unpaid leave because they have chosen not to get vaccinated. They have until Dec. 1 to get their shots or lose their jobs.

Since its vaccination requirement was announced, the inoculation rate among employees has gone from 78% to 92%, Kaiser said.

"Vaccine requirements work. New data reinforces that fact each day," White

House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients said Wednesday.


The easing of cases, death and hospitalizations is happening along with other encouraging developments, including the possibility that vaccinations for 5-to-11-year-olds will become available in a matter of weeks and the first pill for treating people sick with COVID-19 could reach the market by year's end.


Worldwide, newly reported cases fell in the last week, continuing a declining global trend that began in August, the World Health Organization said. The U.N. agency reported that the biggest drop decline in deaths was in Africa.

Elsewhere around the world, Russia's daily coronavirus death toll this week surpassed 900 for the first time in the pandemic amid a low vaccination rate and the government's reluctance to impose tough infection-control restrictions. And authorities in Sweden, Denmark and Norway suspended or discouraged the use of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine in young people because of an increased risk of heart inflammation, a very rare side effect associated with the shot. □

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Eviction confusion, again: End of U.S. ban doesn't cause spike

By ANITA SNOW

Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Chandra Dobbs was stunned when the constable showed up on her doorstep with a fat packet of eviction papers. She thought she had more time.

"I didn't think I was going to be evicted because I applied for rental assistance money," Dobbs said a few days later. "But they didn't want to wait the four to six weeks. So now we're homeless - me, my 16-year-old son, my daughter and my grandchild, a toddler." Her confusion is a common theme across America at a time when the federal government has ended renter protections while doling out billions of dollars in rental assistance. Instead of the expected surge in evictions, many landlords are holding off, waiting for the federal money to come through. But while a few jurisdictions bar landlords from evicting renters who have applied for the money, most do not. Court records show the eviction judgment against Dobbs was for \$3,837, which included \$2,700 in rent plus late fees and court and legal costs. Encore Management LLC, which filed for the eviction, did not respond to a request for comment about its side of the case.

Dobbs, who was laid off from her job as an exotic



Pima County Constable Kristen Randall, left, speaks to a rental resident letting them know about their eviction notice Friday, Sept. 24, 2021, in Tucson, Ariz.

dancer during the pandemic, said her family is staying temporarily with friends while working with a nonprofit to find a new home and get money for a rent deposit.

After a slow start, the pace to distribute the first \$25 billion installment of \$46.5 billion in rental assistance is picking up. Treasury Department officials said the program had served 420,000 households in August — up from 340,000 in July — and distributed \$7.7 billion since January.

Treasury officials said the strong signs of progress came from New Jersey,

New York and South Carolina, which at first struggled to get their programs going. New Jersey, for example, sent out no money in the first quarter but now has distributed 78% of its first-installment money and doubled the number of households served in August compared with July. Spending in Florida increased from \$60.9 million in July to \$141.4 million in August while South Carolina went from \$10.6 million to \$25.3 million. New York saw a jump from \$8.5 million to \$307 million.

"These numbers are still early, uncertain and there

is likely additional pain and hardship not showing up in these reports," said Gene Sperling, who is charged with overseeing implementation of Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus rescue package. "But what is out so far is certainly better than anyone's previous best case scenario for the month after the moratorium." Sperling credited rental assistance and an increase in eviction diversion programs as key reasons the tidal wave predictions didn't come through, adding that it was important to keep speeding relief money to landlords. On Wednesday,

the Department of Housing and Urban Development issued a new rule barring landlords from evicting tenants in HUD-subsidized public housing without providing them 30 days' notice and information about available federal emergency rental assistance. Some tenants have benefited from remaining eviction moratoriums including in California which ended last month, New York's which runs through the end of the year and Boston's which is ongoing.

Others have taken advantage of newly created programs from Washington to Texas to Philadelphia to New Hampshire that aimed at keeping eviction cases out of the courts and keeping renters in their homes. Some court systems have also put in place policies staying evictions if a tenant has applied for rental assistance while at least three states and 10 cities have approved measures providing tenants with free legal counsel in eviction proceedings.

Diane Yentel, president and CEO of the low income coalition, said the nonprofit has encouraged leaders of state and local governments to maintain the few local eviction bans still remaining after the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention moratorium ended in late August. □

Associated Press

Alabama capital strips Confederate president's name off road

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP)

— The first capital of the Confederacy has renamed a street honoring the Confederate president to recognize a Black civil rights lawyer instead, despite an Alabama law meant to protect rebel monuments and memorials.

The Montgomery City Council voted Tuesday night to rename Jeff Davis Avenue for attorney Fred D. Gray, who grew up on the street during the Jim Crow era and went on to represent clients including Martin Luther King Jr. and

Rosa Parks.

"When I think of heroes who exemplify the best in our city, (Gray) is certainly at the forefront of that," said Mayor Steven Reed, the city's first Black mayor. He initially proposed the change in December.

The City Council's unanimous approval could prompt a \$25,000 fine under a state law passed in 2017 to prevent the removal or alteration of Confederate monuments, which have been challenged and taken down across the South, but Reed told news

outlets donors already had offered to pay the penalty for the city, where delegates voted to form the Confederacy in 1861.

Gray, 90, still practices law in Tuskegee, located east of Montgomery. He told the Montgomery Advertiser the city had kept him informed. "This is a project of the mayor's," he said. "He expressed it to me. I was very happy about it. And I am very happy about it."

Gray was a young lawyer when Parks was arrested for refusing to give her bus seat to a white man in 1955



Mayor Steven Reed poses for photos with Fred Gray Jr. and Stanley Gray after city council voted unanimously to rename Jeff Davis Ave. after, Gray's father, civil rights attorney Fred Gray at City Hall in Montgomery, Ala., on Tuesday, Oct. 5, 2021.

Associated Press

in defiance of the city's segregation laws. He represented both her and King,

then a young pastor who led the yearlong bus boycott that followed. □

Fed up by pandemic, U.S. food workers launch rare strikes

By DEE-ANN DURBIN and GRANT SCHULTE

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A summer of labor unrest at U.S. food manufacturers has stretched into fall, as pandemic-weary workers continue to strike for better pay.

Around 1,400 workers at Kellogg Co.'s U.S. cereal plants walked off the job this week, saying negotiations with the company over pay and benefits are at an impasse. Meanwhile, in Kentucky, a strike by 420 workers against Heaven Hill Distillery is in its fourth week. The actions come on top of strikes earlier this summer by 600 workers at a Frito-Lay plant in Topeka, Kansas, and 1,000 workers at five Nabisco plants across the U.S. In June, Smithfield Foods narrowly avoided a strike by thousands of workers at a plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

The number of actions is unusual. Kellogg says this is the first time its U.S. cereal workers have gone on strike since 1972. Nabisco workers last walked off the job in 1969.

But after a difficult 18 months, which saw many workers putting in 12-hour shifts and mandatory overtime to meet pandemic demand, employees are in no mood to compromise. "We're drawing a line in



Cherri Crockett and Towanna Toliver join other BCTGM Local 3G union members in a strike against Kellogg Co., Tuesday, Oct. 5, 2021, outside the Kellogg plant on Porter Street in Battle Creek, Mich. Associated Press

the sand," said Rob Long, a production mechanic who has worked at Kellogg's Omaha plant for 11 years. Long said he and others are upset about a two-tiered system of employees that gives fewer benefits and less pay to newer workers, creating a wedge within the ranks. Long said the company wants to get rid of a provision that currently caps the lower tier of workers at 30% of the workforce. After decades of watching companies chip away at pay and benefits, food workers sense that they

have a rare upper hand in the wake of the pandemic, says Patricia Campos-Medina, the executive director of The Worker Institute at ILR Cornell.

Labor shortages mean companies can't easily find replacements for food production workers, she said. And the pandemic put a spotlight on the essential — and sometimes dangerous — nature of their work.

"Workers in general are demanding that companies invest more in the workforce and not just use the profits for the sharehold-

ers," she said.

Campos-Medina said the trend is not only happening with unionized workers like those at Kellogg, who are members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Union. Non-union fast food workers have walked off the job in dozens of U.S. cities seeking a \$15 minimum wage. And workers at three Starbucks stores in Buffalo, New York, are trying to unionize.

The strikes come as food companies are still trying to get back to normal levels of

production. Kellogg's cereal sales had been anemic for years, for example, as families shifted to portable breakfast items like nutrition bars. But when schools closed and kids were home last year, U.S. cereal sales shot up 7%. So far this year, they're down 7.7%.

Kris Bahner, Kellogg's senior vice president for global corporate affairs, says the company's compensation and benefits are already among the industry's best. The company says its employees made an average of \$120,000 last year.

"We are disappointed by the union's decision to strike," she said. Kellogg began negotiating a new four-year contract on Sept. 8.

But workers on the picket line in Omaha say they're routinely working 74- to 84-hour weeks to earn that money. Some workers said they've endured 12-hour shifts seven days a week throughout the pandemic, with only a few minutes' notice about mandatory overtime.

"We do make good money, but we've given up a lot," said Dan Jourdan, a packing machine operator who has worked at Kellogg since 2001. "If we worked just 40 hours a week, we'd make nowhere near that kind of wage." □



Families stand outside the Mansfield ISD Center for the Performing Arts waiting to be reunited with their children, Wednesday, Oct. 6, 2021 in Mansfield, Texas, following a shooting at the Timberview High School in Arlington. Associated Press

By J. STENGLE and J. BLEED
Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — An 18-year-old student opened fire during a fight at his Dallas-area high school on Wednesday, in-

juring four people and then fleeing before being taken into custody hours later, authorities said.

Timothy George Simpkins was taken into custody without incident, the Ar-

Student taken into custody hours after Texas school shooting

lington Police Department tweeted. He was booked in the Arlington jail on three counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and was being held on \$75,000 bail. One person was in critical condition, another was in good condition and a third person was treated for minor abrasions and was scheduled to be released from the hospital Wednesday afternoon, police said. A fourth person was hurt but did not require treatment at a hospital. Police said earlier that three of the four injured were students. The shooting at Timberview High School, which

is in Arlington but belongs to the school district in neighboring Mansfield, stemmed from a fight that broke out in a classroom, Arlington Assistant Police Chief Kevin Kolbye said at news conference before Simpkins' arrest. "This is not a random act of violence," he said. "This is not somebody attacking our school."

Timberview serves about 1,900 students in the ninth through 12th grades. The sprawling complex opened in 2004. After news of the shooting spread, parents gathered at the Mansfield Independent School District Center for the Perform-

ing Arts about 5 miles (8 kilometers) from the high school to be reunited with their kids, who were bused over. Among them was Justin Rockhold, whose ninth-grade son had texted him to let him know he was OK. The shooting happened just days after a shooting at a Houston charter school that injured an administrator. Texas' deadliest school shooting occurred in May of 2018 when a then-17-year-old armed with a shotgun and a pistol opened fire at Santa Fe High School near Houston, killing 10 people, most of whom were students. □

EU leaders fail to give Balkan nations a membership timeline

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN

Associated Press

BRDO CASTLE, Slovenia (AP)

— European Union leaders tried to reassure six Balkan countries they could eventually join the trading bloc if they met its standards, but the leaders failed to provide a credible signal Wednesday that the EU's enlargement process will be relaunched in the near future.

Despite years of talk about the "European perspective" of Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, the EU's progress on admitting them has stalled.

A meeting at Brdo Castle, a Renaissance-style fortified palace in Slovenia, gave EU leaders the opportunity to reaffirm their "unequivocal support" for their Western Balkans partners. But they stopped short of offering a timeline for their accession.

The bloc's 27 leaders stressed in their conclusions that any advances would be "based upon credible reforms by partners, fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits." They also underlined the need for the EU to "maintain and deepen its own development, ensuring its capacity to integrate



Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades, front left, and Bulgaria's President Rumen Radev, front right, pose with other EU and Western Balkans leaders during a group photo at an EU summit at the Brdo Congress Center in Kranj, Slovenia, Wednesday, Oct. 6, 2021.

Associated Press

new members."

North Macedonia's prime minister, Zoran Zaev, said that if EU promises don't materialize, "people in the Western Balkans will feel big disappointment that will create huge damage to the European idea of unity and cooperation."

The six nations are at different stages on the EU membership path. Montenegro and Serbia are the most advanced, having opened formal accession talks years ago. Albania

and North Macedonia are awaiting the official opening of negotiations, and Kosovo and Bosnia are potential candidates.

The latest hold-up focuses on Albania and North Macedonia. They have fulfilled the criteria for beginning entry talks, but EU member Bulgaria opposes North Macedonia's inclusion because of a dispute over language and national identity.

EU membership is based on a candidate's progress

in areas such as respect for the rule of law and democratic standards, media freedom and judicial independence, and the implementation of specific socio-economic reforms.

France insisted two years ago that the functioning and decision-making of the EU should be revamped before new members are admitted. Speaking after the meeting, French president Emmanuel Macron said lingering tensions between Kosovo and Serbia,

as well as the quarrel between Bulgaria and North Macedonia, complicate matters. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the head of the EU's executive arm, acknowledged the effort the prospective member nations had made so far.

"We want them in the European Union. We are one European family," von der Leyen said.

"We share the same history ... the same values, and I'm deeply convinced we share the same destiny, too."

Slovenia, which currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, backs its neighbors' membership hopes.

Croatia was the last country admitted into the EU, in 2013. The prospect of membership has served as a powerful driver of political and economic reform in the Balkans and has sometimes helped to keep a lid on tensions in a region torn apart by war in the 1990s. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said Slovenia's Prime Minister Janez Jansa fought "till the last day" for 2030 to be included in the declaration as the deadline for all Western Balkan states to join, but faced opposition from some EU leaders. □

Trudeau says he regrets vacation on Indigenous day

By ROB GILLIES

Associated Press

TORONTO (AP)

— Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Wednesday he made a mistake travelling for a vacation last week on a day meant to honor Indigenous survivors of Canada's residential schools system.

The newly reelected prime minister has faced intense criticism for the Sept. 30 trip after he was filmed on a beach on Vancouver island.

His itinerary initially reported he was in Ottawa for private meetings.

"Travelling on the 30th was a mistake, and I regret it," Trudeau said at a news conference. "This first National Day of Truth and

Reconciliation was an important moment for all of us Indigenous and non-Indigenous to reflect, and to remember."

Trudeau thanked a local chief for taking his call on the weekend so he could apologize for not accepting an invitation to her community on the day.

The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was declared by Trudeau's government after the discovery of 215 children found buried at a former Indigenous residential school in Kamloops, British Columbia, attracted worldwide attention this year.

Many non-Indigenous Canadians had not been aware of the extent of the

problems at the schools until the remains were found. From the 19th century until the 1970s, more than 150,000 Indigenous children were forced to attend state-funded Christian boarding schools in an effort to assimilate them into Canadian society. Thousands of children died there of disease and other causes, with many never returned to their families.

"I'm focused on making this right," Trudeau said.

Many analysts have called Trudeau tone deaf for his vacation and questioned who is advising him.

"How it happened is far less important than it happened," he said.

Trudeau's Liberal Party won

reelection last month but must rely on one opposition

party to pass legislation. □



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau poses with residential school survivors and their families following a ceremony on Parliament Hill on the eve of the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021, in Ottawa, Ontario.

Associated Press

As Lebanese got poorer, politicians stowed wealth abroad

By **BASSEM MROUE**

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A trove of leaked documents confirmed that for years, Lebanon's politicians and bankers have stowed wealth in offshore tax havens and used it to buy expensive properties a galling revelation for masses of newly impoverished Lebanese, caught in one of the world's worst economic meltdowns in decades.

Some of the newly ousted holders of offshore accounts belong to the same ruling elite that is being blamed for the collapse and for derailing the lives of ordinary Lebanese who have lost access to savings and now struggle to get fuel, electricity and medicine.

Bold-faced names in the leaked documents include the longtime central bank governor, a pivotal figure in the failed policies that helped trigger the financial crisis, as well as Prime Minister Najib Mikati and his predecessor.

The documents, named the "Pandora Papers," were examined by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, with the first findings released on Sunday. The ICIJ report exposes the offshore secrets of wealthy elites from more than 200 countries and territories.

It was based on a review of nearly 11.9 million records obtained from 14 firms that provide services in setting up offshore firms and shell companies. Clients of such firms are often trying to hide their wealth and financial activities.

Setting up an offshore company is not illegal, but reinforces the perception that the wealthy and powerful play by different rules a particularly upsetting notion for many Lebanese.

The papers show how members of the political class were sending wealth abroad for years, even as they urged people to deposit money in Lebanon's banks, assuring them that it was safe, said Alia Ibrahim, a Lebanese journalist.

"We are not talking about

regular citizens," said Ibrahim, a co-founder of Daraj, a Beirut-based independent digital media platform, and one of scores of journalists across the world who worked with ICIJ on



A combo of file pictures show portraits of Lebanese politicians whose names were revealed in Pandora documents, Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati at the government palace, in Beirut, March 22, 2013, left, Riad Salameh the governor of Lebanon's Central Bank, smiles during a press conference, in Beirut, Lebanon, November 11, 2019, center, and former Lebanese Prime Minister, Hassan Diab, at the presidential palace, in Baabda, east of Beirut, Lebanon, December 19, 2019, right.

Associated Press

the investigation into the documents.

"These are politicians who served in public office for years, and they are partly responsible for the current crisis Lebanon is going through," she said.

Lebanon is in the midst of what the World Bank says is one of the world's worst economic meltdowns in the past 150 years. More than 70% of the population has been thrown into poverty, their savings nearly wiped out in the crisis that began in late 2019 and was in part caused by decades of corruption and mismanagement by the political class.

Hundreds of thousands of people staged nationwide protests against corruption starting in late 2019. Yet two years later the same politicians still run the country in the same way, protected by the sectarian-based system.

One of the protesters, Samir Skaff, said that the Lebanese are not surprised to be told that the political class "is made up of a bunch of thieves."

"We have been saying that for years," he said.

Offshore companies,

though not illegal, can be used to elude taxes or hide illicitly gained money. The leaks only add further confirmation to what Lebanese have long said about their ruling class though repeat-

ed reports of graft or illicit activity in the past have failed to bring change.

One of the 14 firms listed by ICIJ as providing offshore services is Trident Trust, with 346 Lebanese clients making up the largest group, more than double the second-place country, Britain. One focus of the revelations is Riad Salameh, who has been Lebanon's central bank governor for nearly 30 years.

Daraj reported that the documents showed Salameh founded a company called AMANIOR, based in the British Virgin Islands, in 2007. He is listed as its full owner and sole director, which Daraj said appeared to violate Lebanese laws forbidding the central bank governor from activity in any enterprise.

Salameh's office told The Associated Press that the central bank governor has no comment on the documents. ICIJ quoted him as saying that he declares his assets and has complied with reporting obligations under Lebanese law.

Salameh, 70, is being investigated in Switzerland and France for potential money laundering and

embezzlement. Local media reported over the past months that Salameh and his brother as well as one of his aides have been involved in illegal businesses, including money transfers

abroad despite the capital controls imposed at home. Salameh had denied making such transfers.

Other documents showed that Marwan Kheireddine, chairman of Lebanon's Al-Mawarid Bank, was involved in setting up a flurry of offshore businesses in the months just before the economic crisis hit in late 2019. In November that year, his bank and others began imposing capital controls that meant Lebanese could pull very little money out of their accounts even as the currency crashed, wrecking their savings' value.

The Pandora Papers reveal that in 2019, Kheireddine received control of an offshore firm in the British Virgin Islands, which he then used to buy a \$2 million yacht.

In January 2019, he and his brother set up four firms in Britain on the same day, all based at the same London address, and all registered as "small companies," which Daraj said meant they are exempt from auditing. In 2020, Kheireddine bought a \$9.9 million New York penthouse sold by American actress Jennifer Lawrence, Lebanese media reported at the time.

Kheireddine is a former Cabinet minister and a senior member of the Lebanese Democratic Party. He did not respond to calls and a text message by the AP.

Prime Minister Mikati, a businessman who formed a new government last month, has owned a Panama-based offshore company since the 1990s. He used it in 2008 to buy property in Monaco worth more than \$10 million, Daraj reported from the documents.

The leaked documents also show that his son Maher was a director of at least two British Virgin Islands-based companies, which his father's Monaco-based company, M1 Group, used to obtain an office in central London.

Mikati released a statement saying his family fortune was amassed prior to his involvement in politics and was "compliant with global standards" and regularly scrutinized by auditors. Contacted by the AP, Mikati's media adviser Fares Gemayel said he had no comment.

Speaking to Daraj, Maher Mikati said it was common for people in Lebanon to use offshore companies "due to the easy process of incorporation" and denied the purpose was to evade taxes.

Mikati's predecessor as prime minister, Hassan Diab, was a co-owner of a shell company in the British Virgin Islands, Daraj reported. Diab's office said in a statement Monday that he helped establish the company in 2015, but it did not do any business and he resigned from the firm and gave up his shares in 2019. Diab's government resigned days after a massive Aug. 4, 2020, blast in Beirut that killed and injured hundreds and destroyed the city's port and nearby neighborhoods. Diab was charged with intentional killings and negligence in the case. He denies any wrongdoing but has refused to be questioned by the judge leading the investigation. □

Mexico wants progress on U.S. extraditions, arms trafficking

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico said it wants to see more U.S. action on extraditions and weapons trafficking at security meetings scheduled for Friday with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Mexico's top diplomat said Tuesday he wants to see faster extraditions of suspects from the United States and fewer guns coming across the border.

"It is important that you, United States, take effective, efficient actions to drastically reduce the illegal trafficking of weapons," said Foreign Relations Secretary Marcelo Ebrard.

Ebrard also called for "quick judicial assistance," suggesting that while Mexico had extradited suspects quickly to the United States, it wasn't the same pace the other way around.

"Extraditions should have the same speed from there to here, as from here to there, something that is not the case right now," Ebrard said.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has also been near-obsessed



Marcelo Luis Ebrard Casaubon, minister of foreign affairs of Mexico, during a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, Thursday, Sept. 23, 2021, during the 76th Session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

with two points: first, that he wants the U.S. government to contribute to expanding the Mexican government's tree-planting scheme, as a way to pay farmers and prevent them from being recruited by drug gangs. The U.S. has so far apparently been cool to the idea. Secondly, López Obrador

wants more of the illicit money tracked and seized in the United States from Mexican suspects to be returned to Mexico.

"In the case of the flow of money, what has happened regarding the tracing of the money? There have been few results there," he said.

Associated Press

U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas is also scheduled to attend the talks in Mexico City, though Ebrard suggested migration won't be the main agenda item. Ebrard and López Obrador have declared an end

to the previous U.S.-Mexico cooperation scheme, known as the Merida Initiative. Both have said Mexico doesn't want handouts of military or police equipment, but rather a more equal relationship.

"It's about mutual respect. If you don't respect me, I don't respect you. If we do not respect each other, it is going to be very difficult to get something done," Ebrard said.

While the Merida Initiative did initially focus on giving Mexico aircraft in the early years after it was implemented in 2008, in its later years it was focused more on law enforcement training and professionalization. U.S. officials, on the other hand, are expected to focus on issues like the increasing trafficking of the synthetic opioid fentanyl, which is largely produced in Mexico from precursor chemicals imported from China. Mexican cartels press the fentanyl into counterfeit pills that contain wildly varying and often lethal doses of the potent opioid. □

South Africa's Desmond Tutu turns 90 amid new racist slur

By **ANDREW MELDRUM**

Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — As South Africa's anti-apartheid icon Archbishop Desmond Tutu turns

90, recent racist graffiti on a portrait of the Nobel winner highlights the continuing relevance of his work for equality.

Often hailed as the con-

science of South Africa, Tutu was a key campaigner against South Africa's previous brutal system of oppression against the country's Black majority. After South Africa achieved democracy in 1994, he continued to be an outspoken proponent of reconciliation, justice and LGBT rights. The racial insult sprayed last month on a mural of Tutu in Cape Town is "loathsome and sad," said Mamphela Ramphele, acting chairwoman of the Desmond and Leah Tutu Trust. South Africans must continue Tutu's work for racial equality, she told The Associated Press.

"Racism is a curse South Africa must escape," said Ramphele.

"Archbishop Tutu's legacy is huge. He fought against racism and fought for the humanity of us all." □



In this Oct. 31, 2019 file photo Anglican Archbishop Emeritus, Desmond Tutu and his wife Leah pose for a photo in Cape Town, South Africa, in support of the South African Springboks Rugby team.

Associated Press

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LOCAL



Gelatissimo Introduces Spooky Boo Halloween Treat



Gelatissimo Aruba is known for creating the best tasting gelato that Aruba has to offer, and this Halloween inspired gelato flavor is no exception to that rule. The Spooky Boo is sure to delight each palette, adding a little bit of fear of overindulging in its deliciousness.

The multi-colored gelato consists of 3 layers; Black Hawaii, Mandarin and Wild berry. Each scoop gives a delicious layer of midnight black, blood red, and pumpkin orange. The perfect color combination to have you reminiscing about those spooky Halloween themed movies and decors. What's most interesting about this blend is the fact that there are no artificial flavors in this gelato delight, it is gluten-free and doesn't contain nuts. Thus, making this option a must have for everyone, even the most health-conscious.

The spooky boo gelato special is available for the entire month of October at Gelatissimo Palm Pier, Gelatissimo Corner, and Gelatissimo Wholesale. All you need to do is ask for the Spooky Boo and prepare for the fright.

For more information go to www.gelatissimoaruba.com.



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Builders Club of Filomena College Mavo elected their board for the 2021 – 2022 Kiwanistic year

Kiwanis Club of San Nicolas is the proud sponsor club for this

SAN NICOLAS – Last April, Kiwanis Club of San Nicolas together with the school administration of Filomena College Mavo had their first event for the signing up of interested students that wanted to be part of the 1st Kiwanis Builders Club for the above-mentioned school.

On Monday these students got the opportunity to hold their first election. During this election, members of the Builders club got to elect those that will represent them as the board of the Builders Club. Kiwanis Club of San Nicolas is a relatively "young" Kiwanis Club. Established in January 2020, the club has done many things that stays in the lines of their motto; which is: "Teaching the kids how to fish". In other words, the club believes that once you educate/provide the tools and help "shape" these young minds; they would be able to give back themselves, but also provide for themselves. The idea is to inculcate the Kiwanis philosophy as young as possible: leadership, caring, inclusiveness and character building. These are aspects of the Builders Club program that resonated with the mission and vision of the new school administration. Ms. Raquel Lampe and Ms. Jorainne Oduber. "Our students are full of potential and we want to create the opportunity together with other strategic partners, the platform for our students to showcase their potential", is what Ms. Lampe expressed during one of the first meetings with Kiwanis Club of San Nicolas. In April, the students organized a Food Drive in order to help families in need. 20 families received food items, good for two weeks of meals from what was donated during this food drive. Boxes were delivered to 10 different school in the San Nicolas and surrounded

areas. Headmasters that were surprised with these food boxes for the families in need at their school, were very grateful and thanked the members of the Builders Club that helped with the drop-off of these boxes. Last week Monday, a total of 85 students, got to cast their votes during recess time in a very happy and positive atmosphere. Iriengelo Jamanika was elected as the President, Jean Ferrin Castillo Will serve as the vice-president, Rudlene Boezem will be the secretary, Sharily Boekhoudt as the treasurer, Mireya Weller PR/ Editor and Iriengely Jamanika will serve as the person in charge of Service Projects. Teachers Jorraine Oduber and Raquel Leocadia will be their faculty advisors together with a member of the Kiwanis Club of San Nicolas. Kiwanis Club of San Nicolas members are proud to help create the opportunity for students of Filomena College Mavo to showcase their maximum potential.

"Sleeves up" and now the real work starts! □

October is breast cancer awareness month



ORANJESTAD – Each year, October is the month dedicated to breast cancer awareness.

The goal is:

- To increase awareness of breast cancer;
- support women to reduce the risks of this disease;
- Promote on-time detection of irregularities in the breast of healthy women;
- To get immediate medical attention if you find a suspicious lump in your breast.

Below you will find some preventive measures against

breast cancer:

- Eat nutritious and healthy food;
- avoid alcohol;
- visit your physician for regular exams;
- practice sports or exercise regularly;
- preventive surgery is recommended for women with a high risk of getting the disease;
- Auto examination of your breast is essential to detect breast cancer early;
- Women 40 years or older must have a mammography every two years. □

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Bohemian Restaurant & Bar, The Story: French Nomads in Culinary Avant-Garde



Like nomads travel from place to place to find fresh pasture for their livestock, the Nataf family –father Victor with sons David and Gregory - faithfully followed their nose for good food. As young boys, they indulged in their grandparent's culinary joie-de-vivre in the South of France. Ticked by the palette of excellent dishes prepared in their mid-seventies' restaurant in the Alps of France and filled with exquisite taste of their other restaurants in the beautiful island of Porquerolles near St Tropez that

made it to a ranking of 13/20 in the Gault Millau restaurant grading. To the Natafs, food is a bohemian experience_ unconventional, eclectic and off the beaten track. Welcome to Bohemian Aruba!

A Grande entrée through a huge, wooden, Moroccan-style door takes you into a foodies Garden of Eden. Big trees stand tall and proudly, lit with hanging lanterns creating a green and romantic lush paradise. There's a playful setting of different-styled tables, including

seating under a Colombian Rattan tipi tent, complete the feel of let go alias laissez-faire. The cool bar blinks to New York loft style, think industrial bold. Waiters with hip suspenders and berets add a hint of French flair while lounge music fills the air. The décor is designed by David himself.

David Nataf - Owner

"Thoughts of finger licking dishes fill my mind thinking of my youth. The smell of fresh-baked croissants and chocolate bread hand made by my uncle's brother in law's father "the baker". The restaurant's kitchen fridge stuffed with the most exquisite dishes that my brother and I consumed secretly after a night out to the frustration of the chef. We were young boys eating away the night with foie gras and loup de mer local branzino." Tongue melting fondue and raclette, wood oven pizzas with fresh Emmentaler cheese and hand-picked champignons founded his foodie character. Add this to the time he spent at the grandparents' house in the vineyards with fruits, veggies, poultry, and game within hand's reach. What was missing was bought at the weekly farmers market. "I grew up with the farm-to-table concept."

Le Magic

The family magic is translated through David into Bohemian. Starters like Vitello Tonnato, le Ceviche, homemade Foie Gras Terrine or Escargots "A la Bourguignonne" tickle your taste buds. For entrees Whole Shrimps Flambe with Cognac, Grilled 10oz Angus Rib Eye Steak "Maître d'Hôtel" or Braised Lamb Shank ignite passion in your soul. Spicy Moroccan Mahi-Mahi Kebab with chickpea hummus and ratatouille crumble, Paella made with their own fish broth filled with chicken seafood and chorizo are other culinary delights but there is much more. Wines are imported directly from France regions, as is the champagne. Italian, Spanish, American and Australian choices



complete the list.

Raving reviews on a continuous basis prove that Bohemian has got it! Every Wednesday there is Live Flamenco with Angela Croes, on Thursdays you will enjoy the beautiful live sounds of Angela's violin and on Friday's and Saturday's go with the beat of electro lounge. Live salsa music can be enjoyed on Sunday's.

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For reservations call +297 280 8448 or mail reservations@bohemia-aruba.com or book through the website bohemainaruba.com. □



How to invest in cryptocurrency without buying any

By **ALANA BENSON**
of NerdWallet

Cryptocurrencies are inherently cryptic — it's right there in the name. And if you follow Warren Buffett's advice to never invest in businesses you can't understand, it may be hard to justify investing in a currency made of math instead of gold. But it's also hard to ignore some cryptocurrencies' astounding performance: The price of one bitcoin jumped from just under \$5,000 in March 2020 to over \$60,000 as of this April. The excitement surrounding digital currency may leave some investors feeling like the lonely kid at the pool party, wanting to join their friends having fun in the deep end, but too nervous to jump in.

For those investors who are cautiously curious, here are ways to gain exposure to cryptocurrency without buying it, and if you do decide to purchase, how to lower your risk.

INVEST IN COMPANIES WITH CRYPTOCURRENCY HOLDINGS

Think of this strategy as cryptocurrency investing once removed. Some publicly traded companies have cryptocurrency holdings. And because they are betting on its success, you can too, with those companies acting as a buffer. "When you're thinking about investing in a company because they have exposure to crypto, it really runs the gamut from how



This May 12, 2021, file photo shows an advertisement for the cryptocurrency Bitcoin displayed on a tram in Hong Kong.

direct or indirect you are in terms of that exposure," says Douglas Boneparth, a certified financial planner and president of Bone Fide Wealth in New York City. "It just depends on how much of their balance sheet is in crypto." Checking a company's balance sheet can be revealing: As of June 30, 2021, Tesla held \$1.31 billion in digital assets. And while the tech giant has received lots of media attention for its investment, that \$1.31 billion currently equates to only about 2.4% of Tesla's total assets. But if those assets balloon in value, as cryptocurrency is sometimes wont to do, Tesla's stock value could too.

INVEST IN CRYPTOCURRENCY INFRASTRUCTURE

Another way to gain exposure is to invest in companies that have a stake in the cryptocurrency industry. Coinbase is a platform where investors can buy and sell cryptocurrency — and it's publicly traded. "Just like you have with gold, you can either invest in the commodity itself or the infrastructure around it, the miners, the materials needed for mining, same with energy and oil," Boneparth says. "And there are public companies that are specifically operating in the blockchain space, but there's not many of them." Riot Blockchain Inc. is one of those few publicly trad-

ed companies that focuses on cryptocurrency mining. Riot Blockchain, among others, helps build cryptocurrency infrastructure and provides another cryptocurrency-adjacent investment opportunity.

GET READY FOR A CRYPTOCURRENCY ETF

While there are currently no cryptocurrency exchange-traded funds that have been approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission, there is demand for them. A cryptocurrency ETF would operate much like any other ETF, but instead of tracking a market exchange like the S&P 500, it would track a cryptocurrency. For instance, a bitcoin ETF would

track the price of bitcoin. "There's been many different attempts at ETFs and many of these have been rejected. There are ETFs in other countries for bitcoin that have been permitted, and I think it's just a thing that will happen in time," says Tristan Yver, the head of strategy at FTX.US, a U.S.-regulated cryptocurrency exchange. "I don't have an estimate of when this will occur, but I do think it's something that will happen, and I think it's something that will allow people who aren't comfortable with investing directly in digital assets to get exposure to bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies."

There have been numerous applications for cryptocurrency ETFs, and the SEC is expected to decide whether to approve investment manager VanEck's bid for a bitcoin ETF, which could be the United States' first such fund, on Nov. 14, 2021.

USE CAUTION IF INVESTING DIRECTLY

If you're willing to invest in cryptocurrency directly, there are a few ways you can mitigate your risk. One way to do this is to reduce the amount of money you invest. Some credit cards offer cryptocurrency rewards in a similar way as cash back or miles. If you decide to add cryptocurrency to your portfolio by way of rewards, you don't even have to use your own dollars to do so. □

Associated Press

GM, GE look to develop rare earth materials supply chain

By **MICHELLE CHAPMAN**
AP Business Writer

General Motors and General Electric are looking at developing a supply chain of rare earth materials that help make electric vehicles and renewable energy equipment. The companies said Wednesday that the memorandum of understanding between the automaker and GE Renewable Energy will evaluate options to improve sup-

plies of heavy and light rare earth materials as well as magnets, copper and electrical steel. They initially plan to concentrate on making a North America- and Europe-based supply chain of magnet manufacturing, as metal alloys and finished magnets made from rare earth materials are critical components used in creating electric motors for automotive and renewable power gen-

eration. The U.S. is trying to increase its production of rare earth materials, so as not to be so reliant on China. In 2018 China produced some 120,000 metric tons of rare earths, while the U.S. produced 15,000 metric tons, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. On Tuesday GM announced that it's building a huge new electric vehicle battery lab in Michigan where scientists will work on chemistry to cut



This Oct. 16, 2019, file photo shows a sign at a General Motors facility in Langhorne, Pa.

Associated Press

costs 60% over current vehicles and allow people to travel 500 to 600 miles (800 to 965 kilometers) per charge. The Detroit automaker plans to spend \$35 billion on electric and au-

tonomous vehicles from 2020 to 2025. It anticipates rolling out 30 new electric vehicles worldwide by 2025 and has a goal of selling only electric passenger vehicles by 2035. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Band clip
- 6 Persian Gulf nation
- 11 Decorate
- 12 Bring together
- 13 Namely
- 14 Second president
- 15 Without mess
- 17 CIA fore-runner
- 19 Crater part
- 20 Air gun ammo
- 23 Come to an end
- 25 Drifting ice
- 26 Othello's emotion
- 28 Quiche base
- 29 Russia's Brezhnev
- 30 Kicker's aid
- 31 Fellow
- 32 Vital
- 33 Fill with enthusiasm
- 35 Take it easy
- 38 Bananas
- 41 Blow away
- 42 Texas player
- 43 Truffle, e.g.
- 44 Oozes

DOWN

- 1 Brewery sight
- 2 Wedding words
- 3 Toward the audience
- 4 One of the Great Lakes
- 5 One of the Great Lakes
- 6 Uneasy feeling
- 7 Tennis star
- 8 Acapulco aunt
- 9 Money machine
- 10 In medias —

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T	R	I	E	S		O	C	T	E
S	E	N	T			R	A	I	D

Yesterday's answer

- 16 In name only
- 17 — d'art
- 18 Long attack
- 20 Sign of writer's block
- 21 Bacall's love
- 22 Run-down site
- 24 High trains
- 25 To's opposite
- 27 New York tribe
- 31 Tonic, for one
- 33 Disconcert
- 34 Spur on
- 35 Scoundrel
- 36 Outback bird
- 37 Research
- 39 Energy
- 40 Word of accord

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10
11						12				
13						14				
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35	36	37				38			39	40
41						42				
43						44				

10-7

A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

10-7

CRYPTOQUOTE

X U A I A I V V Y O V T A U D F D L

X D M P J H F M V Z A F D A I U F E

G M V W S Z D H A U F C D M V T P W O V Z

A I W F W F D P J E W M J V F I D Z V

— X V W M Q E W M J V F V M

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: HOME IS THE PLACE WHERE YOU CAN ENJOY CORN ON THE COB. SOUP AND WATERMELON SOURCE: OBSOLETE



In this Feb. 7, 1969, file photo, workers collect oil-soaked straw from the beach at Santa Barbara, Calif., following a leak from an off-shore well that covered area beaches.

Associated Press

California spill came 52 years after historic oil disaster

By CHRISTINA LARSON
AP Science Writer

The weekend oil leak along the Southern California coast happened not far from the site of the catastrophe more than a generation ago that helped give rise to the modern environmental movement itself: the 1969 Santa Barbara spill.

That still ranks in the top tier of human-caused disasters in the United States and is the nation's third-largest oil spill, behind only the 2010 Deepwater Horizon and 1989 Exxon Valdez calamities.

During a 10-day period in early 1969, between about 3.5 million and 4.2 million gallons of crude spilled into the Santa Barbara Channel after a blowout six miles offshore on a Union Oil drilling platform. The disaster area was about 115 miles from the site of the 126,000-gallon spill over the weekend that fouled Huntington Beach, a celebrated surfing spot.

The Union Oil rig had been controversial since its inception, but local California communities hadn't been given any voice in decisions about drilling in federal waters. And corners were cut during the construction process: Regulations called for protective steel casing to extend at least 300 feet below the ocean floor, but the company obtained a waiver allowing it to install only 239 feet of casing.

In the aftermath of the spill, thousands of oil-coated birds perished and photos of the carnage on beaches were widely circulated in newspapers and magazines.

President Richard Nixon visited the site in March 1969 and told reporters, "It is sad that it was necessary that Santa Barbara should be the example that had to bring it to the attention of the American people."

That example of communities left out of crucial decisions and corners cut to save time or money for large companies garnered national attention and caused out-

rage. It added momentum to the movement to organize the first Earth Day the next year. Wisconsin Sen. Gaylord Nelson, an early environmentalist, visited the Santa Barbara oil spill site and later said it inspired him to organize "a nationwide teach-in on the environment."

The oil spill was not the only U.S. environmental crisis in the 1960s. The links between rampant overuse of the pesticide DDT and damaged ecosystems including the dwindling population of bald eagles were the subject of Rachel Carson's seminal 1962 book, "Silent Spring."

A raft of far-reaching federal environmental legislation was enacted in the early 1970s, including the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (1970) and the passage of the Clean Air Act (1970) and Clean Water Act (1972).

"It's frustrating that spills like this keep happening," said Damon Nagami, a senior attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council, as he walked along cordoned-off areas of Huntington Beach. "I grew up near here, so this feels really personal."

"These are entirely preventable catastrophes," he said, though he added that managing offshore drilling is complex because "there are lots of regulatory bodies with overlapping responsibilities, depending on whether the activity is happening in federal waters, state waters or international waters."

Oil spills damage coastal ecosystems, marine life and, if the oil-laden water moves into storm drainage systems, local communities.

"Once the oil gets into an ecosystem, it's hard to get out," Nagami said. "The impacts are felt for years, for decades."

Don Anair, a research and deputy director at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said oil spills are "a very visible image of our reliance on fossil fuels." □

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Daniel Craig on bidding Bond goodbye in 'No Time to Die'

By JAKE COYLE

AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When Daniel Craig first got the gig, he felt like something had gone amiss. "You've got the wrong guy," he told the producers.

But Barbara Broccoli and Michael Wilson insisted. No, he was the one. He was James Bond.

Craig, then a rising performer but far from the expected choice, never had any ambitions to play James Bond. He had assumed he was being strung along as part of a massive casting machine, one of dozens of actors screen tested.

"Once I did find out, I was incredibly flattered and deeply confused," Craig recalled in an interview. "I just felt like I wasn't the right person."

Fifteen years and five films later, Craig's tenure as 007 is coming to a close. "No Time to Die," which opens in the U.S. on Friday after a 16-month delay due to the pandemic, is the last hurrah in Craig's celebrated Bond era, a stewardship that saw Craig remake and emotionally deepen the once retrograde superspy — with more than \$3 billion in box office along the way. Once derisively labeled "Blond Bond," Craig turned out to be a smash success.

"It paid off in spades," said Broccoli. "He's truly remarkable. He's reinvented it for the 21st century. He explored the inner-life of Bond."



This image released by Metro Goldwyn Mayer Pictures shows Daniel Craig in a scene from "No Time To Die."

But would Craig have ever gone through with it had he known what he was in for?

"If I had known more, I don't think I would have been able to do it. The less information I had back then, the better," said Craig, speaking by Zoom from New York. "The rest of it, the weight of it, how huge it all really is — I didn't know. I didn't really understand."

He pauses. "I don't suppose I really understand it now, either," Craig added. "I pretend to understand. That's what getting older is all about. I pretend better than I did back then."

"No Time to Die," directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga, is,

with certainty, Craig's final turn in the tux. But it's also a culmination to where Craig has been driving Bond. His 007 is a character, not an icon, capable of grief and regret, and far from bullet-proof. That evolution takes center stage in "No Time to Die."

"I always just felt: How do these things affect him? Within a Bond world. Not in, like, a Hamlet way. But in a Bond world," says Craig, who won't play Hamlet but Macbeth — a play about the perils of ambition — on Broadway next year.

"No Time to Die" started off unsteadily with writer-director Danny Boyle departing over creative differences. Fukunaga stepped in and

the script was completely rewritten.

That the film was even happening in the first place was, to some, surprising. After the previous entry, 2015's "Spectre," Craig had suggested he'd rather slit his wrists than make another. The physical toll of the films and the time commitment — "It's a year," he says of each film -- was wearing on him.

"I've often been criticized as moaning about it," said Craig, 53. "After 'Spectre' I went: I don't think I can do this anymore. I got to a point where it was like: The risk feels too great. That phone call home where I phone up and say I'm injured, I'm in the hospital --

it's not a nice phone call to make, and it's happened a lot over the years."

He chuckles. "It happened on this as well, but there you go."

During filming in Jamaica, Craig slipped while running on a wet dock and badly injured his ankle. The film-makers could hardly know then that temporarily losing their star would just be one of many headaches to come. Before the pandemic arrived, "No Time to Die" was slated to open in April 2020. Television ads ran. Craig hosted "Saturday Night Live." The film's theme, by Billie Eilish, was released, and won a Grammy months before the film's London premiere.

"No Time to Die" arrives at a crucial juncture for the movie business. Lately, some ticket sales have been reaching pre-pandemic levels. Bond is poised not just to save the world one more time but also give movie theaters a lift while he's at it. Sales in the U.K. over the weekend were on par with the opening for 2012's "Skyfall," which cleared \$1.1 billion at the box office.

But Craig's departure may test the franchise more than any previous 007 changing of the guard since Sean Connery exited. During his five films, Craig has shaped the overall series as much as he has the character, bringing in top-class filmmakers and raising the bar, overall. □



Will Packer speaks at the "Rob Riggle: Global Investigator" panel during the Discovery Network TCA Winter Press Tour on Jan. 16, 2020, in Pasadena, Calif.

Associated Press

By LINDSEY BAHR

AP Film Writer

"Girls Trip" producer Will Packer will produce next

year's Oscars, the film academy said Tuesday.

It's the first time Packer has been selected for the gig

Oscars enlist Will Packer to produce 94th ceremony

and the third time in as many years that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and broadcaster ABC have enlisted new teams to produce the show. "What an honor!" Packer said in a statement. "The power, the beauty, the romance of the imagery in movies has always attracted me. I'm fully embracing the challenge of bringing an ode to one of the most iconic mediums in the world to life." As the

founder and CEO of the film production company Will Packer Productions and Will Packer Media, Packer has produced or executive produced films like "Night School" and "Straight Outta Compton" as well as the television reboot of "Roots." Packer's chief of staff Shayla Cowan is producing the Oscars alongside him.

The Oscars have in recent years experienced declining ratings. Its pandemic broadcast earlier this year,

like most major awards shows, was less than half of its previous low. But after this year's detour to Union Station, the proceedings are returning to the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood in 2022. "He's already bringing a boundless energy and a focus on innovation to this year's Oscars, to entertain the widest spectrum of fans," said academy President David Rubin and Academy CEO Dawn Hudson in a statement. □

Cognizant, Aon share wealth in golf sponsorship

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP Golf Writer

The 13 women who founded the LPGA Tour would have reason to be proud this week.

It goes beyond the tournament named in their honor, featuring nine of the top 10 players in the women's world ranking. It's not just that it will be played at Mountain Ridge, a Donald Ross design in northern New Jersey where one-third of the rounds are played by women.

The prize money is \$3 million, the largest of any regular LPGA event, surpassed only by the five majors and the season-ending CME Group Tour Championship. The real progress is how the Cognizant Founders Cup found new life.

Cognizant, a multinational technology company with headquarters in Teaneck, New Jersey, wanted to promote its brand and discovered through research that golf and its global appeal would be a perfect fit.

So it invested — in men and women.

"We went with the notion of investing in world-class male and female athletes," said Gaurav Chand, the chief marketing officer of Cognizant. "One reason we locked in on golf was that it does have incredible, viable male and female athletes. Honestly, I get this question a lot. Why the LPGA? Why the Founders Cup?"

"What we're trying to do in the technology space is increase diversity, make it a level playing field for all genders, all races, all religions," he said. "That essentially is what the (LPGA) founders set out to do."

It joins a slowly growing list of top companies that are providing equal opportunity, and at times equal pay, in golf sponsorship.

Aon built its brand awareness on the jerseys of Manchester United for a decade.

Then its president, Eric Andersen, said the company needed a sponsorship opportunity that would describe what Aon did instead of who it was.

A global professional services firm involved in risk, retirement and health solutions, it created the Aon Risk Reward Challenge. Players who had the lowest

same money for men and women," Ciganda said that day. "I think I'm the winner, but women's golf is the winner today, the LPGA is the winner. So I think we are all

million.

Across the Atlantic, AIG's sponsorship of the Women's British Open has resulted in prize money next year of \$6.8 million. And the USGA

total prize money. Equality can at least start with opportunity, and that's what Cognizant had in mind.

The company's entry into golf began with a deal to become one of three global partners for the next three Presidents Cup matches, starting in 2022. It was never going to stop there. Chand said Cognizant got into the golf business with men and women in mind.

So it purposely waited to announce the Presidents Cup deal until it had something lined up with the LPGA. The Founders Cup, canceled last year because of the coronavirus pandemic, was in the market for a new sponsor, and it turned out to be the perfect fit.

Along with moving the tournament from Arizona, Cognizant immediately doubled the size of the purse. The winner this week receives \$450,000.

"One of the pieces we are very passionate about is to make a fairly equitable investment in both properties," Chand said.

Much like Aon, the decision was received just as well internally.

"The No. 1 feedback is, 'I'm proud to work for a company that puts its money where its mouth is.' We don't talk about diversity and inclusion. We do something," Chand said.

The Presidents Cup, scheduled for Sept. 22-25 next year at Quail Hollow in North Carolina, already has exceeded expectations for hospitality sales. Attendance, not to mention network viewership, is likely to dwarf what the Founders Cup gets this week.

For Chand, it was about more than that.

"We know of some of the challenges," he said. "But every small step is going to help in making it a much more equitable space." □



Karrie Webb, right, of Australia, poses with LPGA Founder Marilynn Smith, left, LPGA "Pioneer" Renee Powell, second from left, and LPGA Founder Shirley Spork, second from right, as Webb arrives for ceremonies after winning the LPGA Founders Cup golf tournament in Phoenix, in this Sunday, March 23, 2014, file photo.

Associated Press

average score for the season on a designated par 5 each week — typically a risk-reward hole — earned a \$1 million bonus.

That's \$1 million for the PGA Tour and \$1 million for the LPGA Tour.

"There's no difference between the PGA and the LPGA," Andersen said. "And we wanted to make a strong statement. There's a lot of dialogue around gender equity in pro sports. This was a great opportunity to put our money where our mouth is."

"The reaction from outside the community was great," he said. "And I can't overstate how great it was internally to do. It's been a real rallying cry for the team, one of those proud moments."

It brought Carlota Ciganda to tears when the Spaniard became the first LPGA winner of the award in 2019 (Brooks Koepka won on the PGA Tour). The \$1 million prize was nearly what she earned the previous season.

"Thank you for putting the

very happy, very proud."

KPMG, a longtime sponsor of Phil Mickelson, signed up former world No. 1 Stacy Lewis and they were part of a commercial on breaking glass ceilings.

That was right about the time KPMG became title sponsor of the Women's PGA Championship, elevating the longtime major with a higher purse (now \$4.5 million, double what it was before KPMG got involved) and taking it to courses that previously held men's majors, such as Hazeltine and Aronimink.

In another major deal, Chevron announced Tuesday it would become the new title sponsor of the LPGA's first major championship of the year, raising its purse some 60% to \$5

is expected to announce by the end of the year a presenting sponsor to boost the U.S. Women's Open purse, which already features the largest payout for the majors.

It's not always about equal pay, which can be a tricky business when accounting for the entire entertainment package, such as TV ratings, attendance and local sponsorship.

The gap is enormous, a product of interest and television.

The PGA Tour is starting a nine-year media rights deal worth an estimated \$7 billion, which is why its total prize money is approaching \$400 million. The LPGA Tour has no such deal, often buying its TV time, and has about \$70 million in



NFL Abroad: League to choose German host city, eyes France

By **KEN MAGUIRE**

AP Sports Writer

LONDON (AP) — The NFL has returned to London with the Atlanta Falcons facing the New York Jets on Sunday but the league is just as focused on its next international destination: Germany.

Brett Gosper, NFL Head of UK and Europe, said they are finalizing their short list of German cities to host a game as early as next season.

The opening of an office in Germany is "reasonably imminent," he added, as is the hiring of a general manager there as the league expands in Europe, with France and Spain also in its sights.

Eight cities in Germany expressed interest in becoming a partner city to host a regular-season game, he said. The NFL announced a bidding process in June.

"We will whittle down to three and we're hoping we'll be able to announce something in the next week or two," Gosper told The Associated Press in an interview this week.

The announcement could coincide with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell's expected trip to London during the International Series. After the Falcons face the Jets on Sunday, the Jacksonville Jaguars play the Miami Dolphins a week later. Both games will be held at the stadium of Premier



In this Wednesday, June 12, 2019, file photo, Brett Gosper, CEO of World Rugby, delivers a speech in Tokyo.

Associated Press

League soccer team Tottenham.

Gosper declined to identify the likely German finalists but said bidders might come to London on an "observer program" for the Jags-Dolphins game.

"They're in the final bid," he said. "There's some sensitivity on their side in particular because they have to go through their own appropriate decision making. We've made sure these cities formed a consortium so it will be a partnership between the region, the city, the owner of the stadium — which in most cases is a Bundesliga football club."

A regular-season game in

Germany seems a question of when, not if, with a decision expected by the end of the year. He said the "only hesitation" on 2022 would be scheduling conflicts with soccer's World Cup, which begins next November in Qatar.

"If we can solve those, then it could be '22. Certainly no later than '23," he said.

A suitable stadium is the biggest factor, followed by ease of travel. Tottenham's state-of-the-art facility was built to host both soccer and NFL games with capacity seating of 62,850.

The cities of Dortmund, Berlin, Gelsenkirchen, and Stuttgart each have a sta-

dium — and Munich has two — capable of holding at least 60,000 fans, with soccer club Borussia Dortmund's the largest at just over 81,000.

Sky Sports, which has the broadcasting rights for the NFL in Britain, earlier reported that Munich and Dusseldorf expressed interest but that Berlin did not, due to laws on commercial promotions.

It's not just about size. Gosper said they're looking for a "deeper relationship than just a game once a year," citing grassroots partnerships and an NFL Academy. Germany, which has increasingly produced ath-

letes for U.S. college football programs, had five teams at various times in the former World League/NFL Europe/NFL Europa. A league office in Germany is upcoming.

"It's reasonably imminent because we're at the intense phase of a search for a general manager. Where we decide that would be set up might depend on where we land on a possible game in Germany," said Gosper, the Australian former CEO of World Rugby.

CITY OF LIGHT?

After Germany, NFL analysis has shown that France would be the next logical European host.

"It would seem that France is probably the third market in that sense in the analysis that we've done, followed by Spain," Gosper said. "The Nordics are very strong too, with a smaller population base."

Those markets "are on a high growth path now, in terms of viewership, in terms of increased fans," he said.

LONDON

The NFL has played 28 regular-season games in London from 2007-19. None were played in the city in 2020 — when four were scheduled — because of the pandemic.

There are seven years left on Tottenham's 10-year contract to host two NFL games annually, Gosper said. □

AP source: NHL investigates Kane for fake vaccine card

By **JOSH DUBOW**

AP Sports Writer

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — San Jose Sharks forward Evander Kane is being investigated on allegations that he used a fake COVID-19 vaccination card.

A person familiar with the investigation says the league is looking into whether Kane submitted a fake card. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because details of the investigation have not been announced by the

NHL.

The latest investigation was first reported by Front Office Sports.

Using a fake vaccination card is illegal in both the United States and Canada, as well as against NHL rules.

This probe is just the latest into Kane, who was cleared last month of allegations made by his estranged wife that he bet on NHL games, including some wagers placed against the Sharks.

The league said it found no

evidence Kane bet on NHL games but said it was looking into other allegations. Kane was also accused by Anna Kane of physical and sexual abuse. He has denied those charges through his attorney.

Kane and the Sharks have agreed that he will stay away from the team during these investigations.

Kane, 30, is three seasons into a \$49 million, seven-year contract. He's with his third organization after being drafted by and debuting with Atlanta/Winnipeg



In this Wednesday, March 24, 2021 file photo, San Jose Sharks left wing Evander Kane (9) watches during an NHL hockey game against the Los Angeles Kings in San Jose, Calif.

Associated Press

and a stint in Buffalo.

Last season, he had 22

goals and 27 assists in 56 games. □